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### Grizzly basketball practice underway

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## GRIZZLY BASKETBALL PRACTICE UNDERWAY

MISSOULA--

Coach Mike Montgomery welcomed 10 lettermen and four returning starters, Wednesday, October 15, the first day of University of Montana basketball practice. The Grizzlies open their season Friday, Nov. 28, when they host Western Washington University. Tipoff for all home games is 8:05 p.m.

"This is the first year since I've been here that we've had as many veteran starters coming back," Montgomery said. Montgomery is beginning his fifth year as a coach at UM, his third as head coach.

The four veteran starters the mustachioed coach is referring to are forwards Marty Green (6-10) and Rod Brandon (6-6) and guards Blaine Taylor (6-2) and Craig Zanon (6-6). All four players are seniors.

Zanon was the Grizzlies' leading scorer last season with 377 points, giving him an average of 15.1. He was also a second All-Big Sky Conference pick, and an all-tournament player at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas-hosted Rebel Roundup Tournament. He was the only player off the third of fourth place team that was selected to the all-tourney team. He is from Kalispell, Montana.

Taylor, from Missoula's Hellgate High School (along with Green), was an honorable mention all conference pick. He was the teams' No. 2 scorer with an 11.2 points per game average. He had 104 assists and also led the team in free throw percentage (.843).

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Brandon, another senior, is from Norwalk, Calif. He has been named the Grizzlies' outstanding defensive player the last two seasons. He averaged 7.6 points and 5.4 rebounds a game last season.

Green came on strong last season, and finished averaging 6.7 points and 4.5 rebounds a contest. He was second on the team with 10 blocked shots. He was the teams' leading rebounder in six games and had 11 against Idaho State, in a 65-52 conference road win.

"The veterans know the system, have played together, and complement each other very well," said Montgomery, who has guided UM to the playoffs both his two seasons as head coach. "I think we have a chance to have a very good year."

"The question mark," Montgomery continued, "will be a center, where we lost John Stroeder. We're hoping sophomore Craig Larsen (6-11) will be ready to take over that position. He has all the skills necessary."

Stroeder was a three-time all conference center at UM, and finished as UM's No. 9 career scorer and No. 10 rebounder. He is currently playing professional basketball for Club Fiat in Birmingham, England.

Montgomery will not only have the four starters back, but he will also have senior Tim Knight (6-8) and sophomore Derrick Pope (6-6), two players who saw a lot of action in the Grizzlies' 17-11 team of a year ago. Knight has the ability to play forward or center.

Add to those two lettermen Larsen, Jim Caler (6-6), Brian Morris (6-7), Dave Johnson (6-10) and redshirt Marc Glass (6-3) and you can understand Montgomery and his staff of Stew Morrill and Bob Niehl's optimism.

On top of that, Montgomery feels he had an outstanding recruiting year, adding Doug Selvig (6-4½ from Plentywood), Rob Hurley (6-5 from Anaconda), Dave Johnson (6-4 from Los Angeles) and Ron Brumfield (6-8 from San Jose.



"we feel optimistic, because it's obvious we could be a good basketball team," Montgomery said. "But a lot of things will have to happen for us to be of championship calibre. Key injuries are always a factor. We also need significant improvement from all of our returnees."

Montgomery said he expected the same teams in last year's playoffs--UM, Idaho, Weber State and Montana State--to be in the thick of the Big Sky race. "The most consistent teams will be the ones in the chase," he said.

"As far as we're concerned, we've got to improve our ability to score," Montgomery said. "But, we expect defense will once again play a key role in our success."

The Grizzlies have led the Big Sky Conference in defense the last nine seasons in-a-row and hold the record for the top defensive scoring average (60.3 in 1978-79). Montana has been ranked in the top 20 in team defense the past two years, including fourth two seasons ago.

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